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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
21 April 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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**TOP SECRET**

**Page Denied**

21 April 1965

HIGHLIGHTS

North Vietnamese Government officials are giving the impression that they anticipate air attacks against Hanoi. All foreign diplomatic dependents in Hanoi have been requested to leave North Vietnam within a week after 16 April and all foreign missions in the capital have been ordered to take civil defense measures for their own protection, [redacted]

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50X1

[redacted] There are also rumors that North Vietnam intends to evacuate the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other "vital" government offices to unspecified but safer areas. In South Vietnam the heavy fighting in Quang Tin Province near Da Nang continues into the third day with relatively heavy Viet Cong casualties. Premier Quat has again indicated that he plans to make some cabinet changes. Peiping has singled out President Johnson's 17 April declaration for bitter criticism asserting that nothing short of complete Communist victory in Vietnam would be satisfactory.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
US and Vietnamese air strikes have been launched for the third consecutive day against well-prepared Viet Cong positions south of Da Nang in Quang Tin Province (Para. 1). A large-scale ARVN heliborne operation is under way in Binh Dinh Province (Para. 2). US marine positions at Phu Bai in Thua Thien Province reported fired on (Para. 3). Viet Cong terrorist and military activity increased slightly in scale last week but decreased in intensity (Para. 9). MACV reports Viet Cong main force units may be regrouping, resupplying, and training, possibly in preparation for initiating offensive operations (Para. 11).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
The self-immolated young Buddhist is alleged to have left a letter attacking Viet Cong mistreatment of Buddhists

50X1

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(Para. 1 and 2). Premier Quat has again indicated his intention to make some cabinet changes (Para. 3).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:  
US and South Vietnamese air strikes continue to inflict damage against bridges, road chokepoints, and convoys (Paras. 1-4). Communist supply routes in the Laotian panhandle apparently remain open (Paras. 5-7). All dependents of foreign diplomatic personnel in Hanoi have been requested to leave because of bombing raids (Para. 8). All foreign missions in Hanoi have been ordered to take air defense measures and North Vietnamese Government offices reportedly are to be evacuated to unspecified safer areas (Paras. 9 and 10).

[REDACTED]

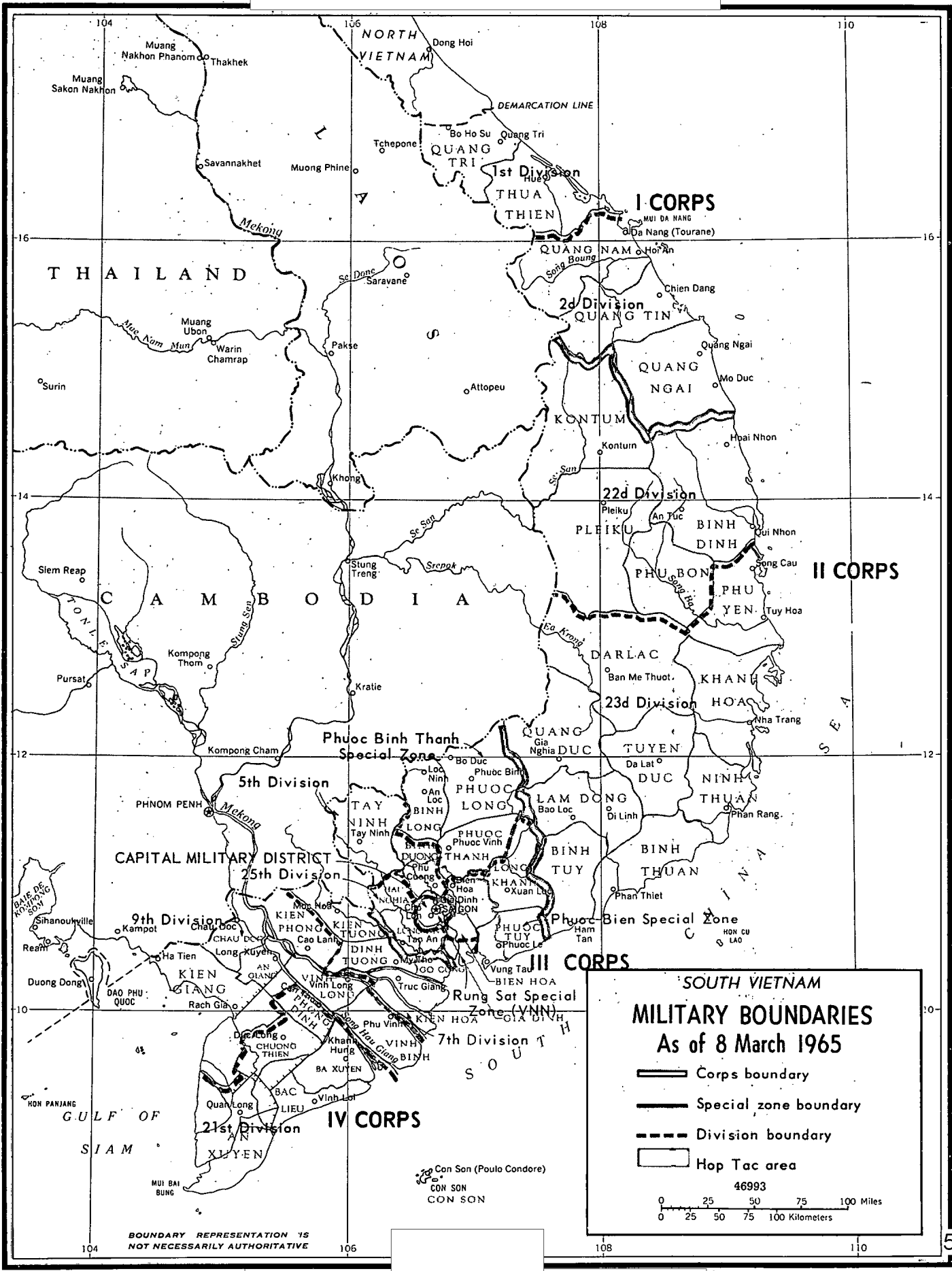
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V. Communist Political Developments:  
Peiping singles out President Johnson's 17 April declaration for bitter criticism emphasizing their professed unwillingness to settle for anything short of a complete Communist victory in Vietnam (Para. 1). The Indonesian radio claims "two battalions" of "volunteers" for Vietnam (Para. 2).

VI. Other Major Aspects:  
Nothing of significance to report.

21 April 1965

50X1



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50X1

## I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Heavy fighting reportedly continues in Quang Tin Province, where US and Vietnamese air strikes were conducted for the third consecutive day against strongly fortified Viet Cong positions near the government outpost of Viet An, 28 miles south of Da Nang air base. MACV has confirmed initial Communist losses of 150 killed (by air strikes), while the latest unofficial estimates place enemy losses as high as 300 killed. Government forces thus far have sustained personnel losses of 24 killed, 45 wounded, and 32 missing, and materiel losses of five armored cars and three helicopters damaged.

2. Forty-two Viet Cong have been killed and 11 captured as the result of the large-scale government heliborne operation initiated in Binh Dinh Province on 19 April to locate and destroy the 50th main force Viet Cong battalion and one local force Viet Cong company. Friendly losses to date are 11 killed (including the nine US helicopter crewmen previously reported), four wounded, two UH-1B helicopters destroyed and one UH-1B damaged. The operation is continuing.

3. Communist guerrillas yesterday placed 60-mm. mortar and small arms fire on US marines defending the important Phu Bai airstrip, in Thua Thien Province, 45 miles south of the DRV border. The marines returned the fire with 81-mm. mortars. No casualties were reported on either side.

4. MACV's military report for 19 April shows 56 Communist-initiated incidents, five of them occurring during the reporting period. Small-scale terrorism, harassment, and sabotage predominated.

5. Government-initiated ground operations of battalion size or larger increased on 19 April from 19 to 22, with ten initiated and seven terminated, none of which produced significant results.

21 April 1965

I-1

50X1

6. Company-strength or smaller operations conducted on 19 April declined to 2,338. Only five contacts were made with the Viet Cong, with minor losses on both sides.

7. The level of over-all VNAF/USAF activity remained generally unchanged. USAF B-57s and A-1Es combined with VNAF A-1H aircraft in attacks on Viet Cong structures and sampans in Vinh Binh and Kien Hoa provinces on 19 April. Pilots reported 20 Viet Cong killed and 66 structures, 10 sampans, and 6 machine-gun emplacements destroyed.

8. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Viet Cong - initiated terrorist and military activity reflected a slight increase in scale but declined sharply in intensity, as measured both by the reduced number of guerrilla armed attacks and by the number of casualties sustained by both government and rebel troops. The week's most significant operations included the 15 April maximum-effort saturation bombing attack against a Viet Cong headquarters in western Tay Ninh Province and a follow-up ground operation which failed to make contact with the Viet Cong, a highly successful ARVN penetration into a major guerrilla supply area in Phuoc Thanh Province, and an action in Quang Tri Province which resulted in a virtual standoff between ARVN and Viet Cong forces.

9. In the Phuoc Thanh operation, two infantry battalions and an airborne battalion engaged a main force Viet Cong company and a quartermaster company. While 16 guerrillas were killed, in addition to an unknown number of killed and wounded taken from the battlefield, the operation's principal result was the destruction of large stores of supplies and transport equipment, including 230 tons of rice, 460 bags of soybeans, 50 bales of cloth, 300 black uniforms, 880 gallons of gasoline, an Esso gas tanker, and 700,000 rounds of small arms ammunition.

10. MACV believes the general lack of contact between ARVN and Viet Cong main force units during the week probably indicates that the Viet Cong are

21 April 1965

I-2

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continuing their program of regrouping, training, and resupply preparatory to initiating offensive operations. The employment of Viet Cong paramilitary forces to initiate incidents reinforces indications of a general period of training and reorganization for the main forces. The training program, apparently scheduled for completion during mid-April, and the possible offensive to follow, may have been delayed due to in-country US/-Vietnamese air action and some recent ARVN operations in which large quantities of rice were seized and heavy personnel and weapons losses inflicted on Communist units.

A statistical comparison of last week's guerrilla activity with that of the previous week follows:

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Attacks</u>	<u>Terrorism</u>	<u>Sabotage</u>	<u>Propaganda</u>	<u>Anti-aircraft</u>	<u>Total Incidents</u>
3-10 Apr	17	345	41	21	7	431
10-17 Apr	9	332	52	13	63	469

11. ARVN casualties during the period 10-17 April totaled 357 (90 KIA, 238 WIA, and 29 MIA/-captured), a substantial decline from the previous week's total of 665 casualties (189 KIA, 386 WIA, and 110 MIA/captured). ARVN weapons losses numbered 315, a sharp rise from the 115 reported lost last week. A considerable number of these weapons losses were accounted for in unopposed Viet Cong raids on Montagnard hamlets.

12. During 10-17 April, the Viet Cong sustained 321 known casualties (260 KIA and 61 captured), considerably less than the previous week's total of 777 casualties (634 KIA and 134 captured). Government forces captured 80 weapons (two crew-served), a decrease in comparison with the 238 weapons (11 crew-served) seized last week.

21 April 1965

I-3

50X1

## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A Buddhist Institute official has claimed to the US Embassy in Saigon that the institute had no prior warning regarding the self-immolation yesterday of the 16-year-old Buddhist novice. The official stated that a letter found near the novice's body provided no insight into his motivation, but that a second letter, purportedly brought to the institute by a friend, contained a strongly anti-Communist rationale for the novice's suicide. This second letter contained statements protesting Viet Cong mistreatment of Buddhist bonzes in Binh Dinh Province, the birthplace of the novice, and denouncing Viet Cong accusations that Buddhist monks had become mere propaganda vehicles for the American and the Vietnamese governments.

2. Whether genuine or not, this letter reflects Buddhist sensitivity to Communist charges of subservience to the Americans, a factor which might tend to set limits on the degree to which the institute will propagandize Viet Cong anti-Buddhist acts.

3. Premier Quat has again indicated [redacted] his dissatisfaction with certain or his cabinet ministers. Although he seems now to be less opposed to Deputy Premier Tuyen and prepared to retain him in the cabinet, Quat indicated that he planned eventually to ease out the ministers of economy, health, and education.

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4. A second contingent of 34 medical and civic action personnel from the Philippines armed forces arrived in Saigon on 17 April, bringing to about 90 the number of such Filipino personnel now serving in South Vietnam.

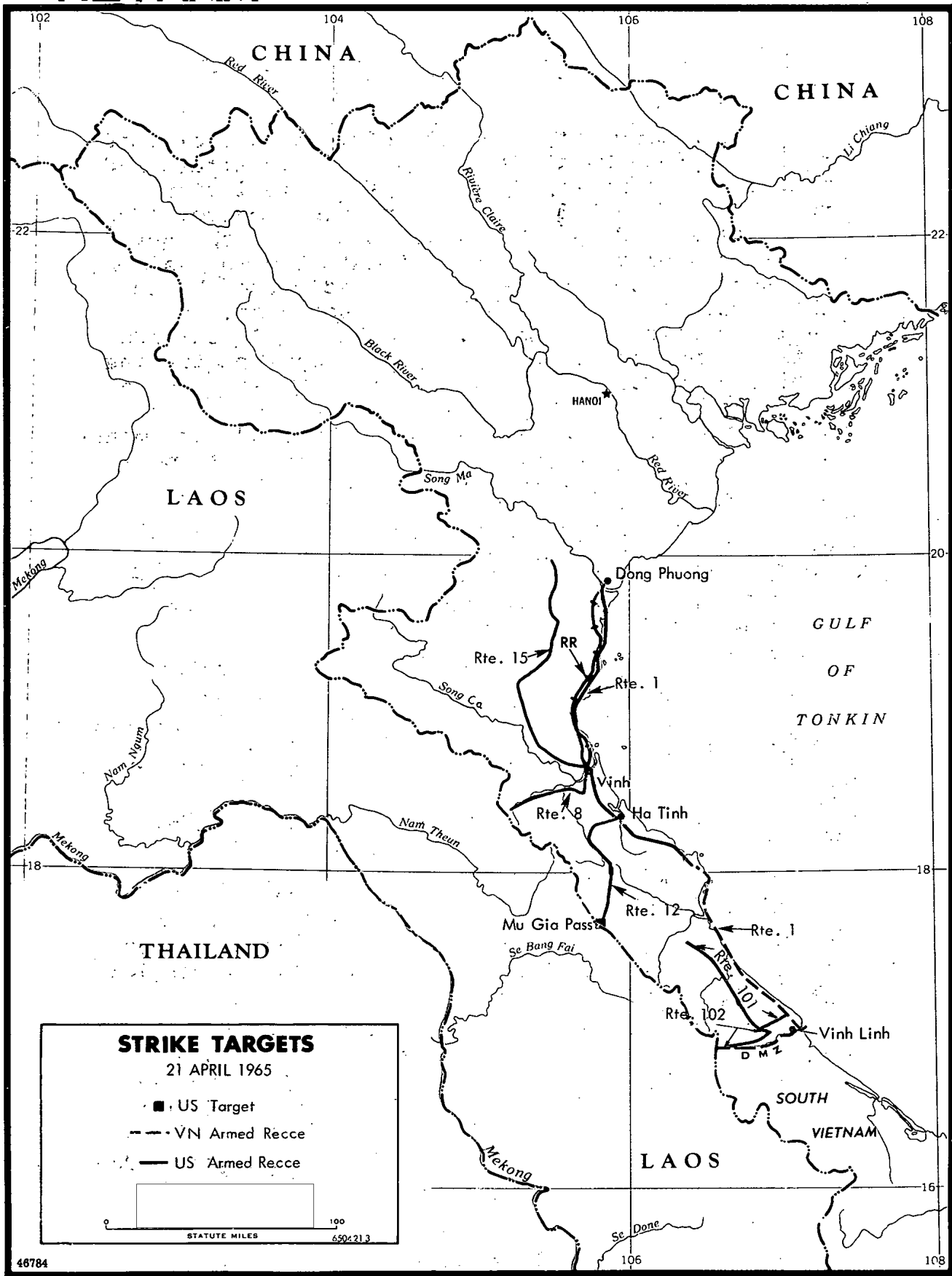
21 April 1965

II-1

50X1

# NORTH VIETNAM

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### III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Results of the 21 April air strikes against North Vietnam are only partially available. An armed reconnaissance mission by US Air Force aircraft along Routes 8 and 12 succeeded in destroying three boxcars and damaging another, as well as cratering a bridge on Route 12. Route 8A was cut in one place and several minor barracks were attacked. A bridge at the Yen Hoi ferry, hit several days ago, was attacked with 114 rockets. Pilots reported seeing an estimated battalion of troops along Route 8 who immediately dispersed into the trees at the approach of the aircraft. All aircraft returned safely.

2. A Vietnamese armed reconnaissance mission along Route 1 between the Cap Mui Ron radar and the DMZ destroyed four large buildings and damaged six small ones. One truck was moderately damaged. Pilots sighted a number of 75-foot boats and attacked four of them, inflicting moderate damage. All aircraft returned safely.

3. A US night armed reconnaissance mission along Routes 1 and 15 destroyed one truck and damaged two others. A 15- to 20-truck convoy on Route 15 was attacked, causing two secondary explosions and many fires. Additional aircraft have been launched in an effort to exploit this target. Pilots reported seeing many single trucks traveling along Route 15 at widely spaced intervals.

4. Results of the armed reconnaissance mission along Routes 101, 102, and 107 are not yet available.

5. Evidence continues to mount that the Communists are succeeding in efforts to keep open their supply arteries in the Laotian panhandle despite the US road interdiction program. These efforts have included the rapid clearing of choke-points near the Mu Gia Pass and farther south on Route 23, the apparent building of bypasses for

21 April 1965

III-1

50X1

bombed-out road sections, the refinement of convoy security, and the construction of new anti-aircraft sites.

6. A sharp increase in Communist truck traffic on Route 23 in the panhandle has been observed in the past week. A total of 202 trucks, carrying unidentified cargo, was detected moving south between 15-19 April past a road-watch team positioned on Route 23 about 50 miles south of Mu Gia Pass. This average of 40 trucks per day contrasts sharply with the average of ten per day which had been maintained past this point since the first of the year. The total southbound trucks for April (518) already exceeds the 398 observed during the entire month of March. In addition, the Communists have recently introduced trucks with greatly increased hauling capacity.

7. The step-up in truck activity is probably part of the Communists' annual pre-rainy season build-up. The ultimate destination of the trucks is not known although some are undoubtedly involved in supplying the large number of Communist troops reported in the Muong Pha Lane and Mahaxay areas. Others are probably carrying supplies farther south in the panhandle for eventual portage into South Vietnam.

8. [redacted]

[redacted] the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry on 17 April that "all wives and children" of foreign diplomats and other foreigners living in Hanoi have been requested to leave North Vietnam within one week from 16 April. The reason given was the "continuous bombing raids" on North Vietnam. [redacted]

[redacted] all foreign missions "must take appropriate measures" for their own protection against air raids, i.e., the construction of air raid shelters.

9. [redacted]

[redacted] the evacuation of dependents is connected with a North Vietnamese plan to evacuate

21 April 1965

III-2

50X1

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the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and presumably other "vital" government departments to unspecified, safer areas. The date for this alleged move of government offices is unknown.

10. These actions by the North Vietnamese may reflect a genuine belief that US air strikes will soon be extended to Hanoi. They may also, however, be intended primarily to impress foreign diplomats and their governments with the potential dangers inherent in any US escalation of the war.

11. [REDACTED] 50X1  
news of the devastation caused by the air strikes in the Dong Hoi and Vinh areas are now reaching Hanoi and that "older people" in Hanoi are extremely afraid. Younger people do not seem as worried, [REDACTED] 50X1

21 April 1965

III-3

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## V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Peiping has singled out for bitter criticism President Johnson's 17 April declaration that the US will never be forced from Vietnam until South Vietnamese independence is guaranteed. Emphasizing Peiping's professed unwillingness to settle for anything short of complete Communist victory in Vietnam, the People's Daily editorial on 21 April asserts that the President in fact seeks the "permanent occupation" of South Vietnam and the "perpetual division of Vietnam." The editorial stresses that "the very purpose" for which the South Vietnamese "people" are fighting is to destroy completely this "so-called independent country" and to realize the "reunification and complete liberation" of Vietnam. In language resembling the 20 April National People's Congress resolution on Vietnam, the editorial pledges that the Chinese people and the "people of the world" will support the "Vietnamese people" as long as the latter have to fight. It concludes with the forceful but generalized rallying cry: "If the US aggressors refuse to quit of their own accord, then let's drive them out!"

2. The progress of Le Duan's talks with the Chinese Communists in Peiping has not been reported by either Peiping or Hanoi. In Djakarta, North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong met with a number of Indonesians on 21 April who have "volunteered" to serve in Vietnam. These volunteers are "two battalions strong," according to an Indonesian radiobroadcast on 21 April. The broadcast also stated that the North Vietnamese premier received a "quantity of arms" from the "volunteers" as a "token" of Indonesian support for the Vietnamese.

3. Soviet President Mikoyan apparently made a special point of attending the 18 April performance of the Cleveland Symphony, even though he had to make an early departure to meet Indian President Radhakrishnan

Ambassador Kohler feels that this was a

21 April 1965

V-1

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50X1

deliberate move on the part of the Soviet leadership to convey their approval of continued US-Soviet cultural exchanges despite the Vietnam crisis. The ambassador feels that the move was especially significant in light of the fact that the Soviet-DRV joint communiqué was published that morning.

21 April 1965

V-2

50X1

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**TOP SECRET**